

Franklin Graham: Build Bridges With Kim Jong Un

Having visited North Korea four times, most recently in May, and worked in this difficult country for many years, I have maintained a special interest and concern for the people of this nation.

The passing of the General Secretary Kim Jong Il gives the United States an opportunity as the people of the DPRK mourn the loss of their leader. We should be working to build stronger bridges of relationship and understanding with his son, Kim Jong Un.

Harsh rhetoric will not solve the grave problems that the people on the Korean peninsula face. My prayer is that President Obama will reach out to the DPRK's new leader and extend a helping hand to the people who are suffering through an early cold winter and serious food shortages. This could go a long way in easing tensions between the two nations and promote harmony and goodwill.

Note: The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has long history in the DPRK. In 1992, Billy Graham became the first foreign religious leader to preach in Pyongyang. During that visit he gave a lecture at Kim Il Sung University, the nation's leading educational institution, and met with President Kim Il Sung. Ruth Bell Graham returned to the DPRK in 1997 after attending high school in Pyongyang in the 1930s. Samaritan's Purse has worked in the DPRK for more than a decade providing essential medical, dental, emergency and nutritional relief. Since 1997, the organization has provided some \$15 million in emergency assistance to the people of North Korea, including relief in 2010.

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